

Quartz Project

Objection Resolution

Meeting June 20, 2016, 2:30-4:30 PM (Pacific Time)

Umpqua National Forest – Supervisor's Office

2900 NW Stewart Parkway, Roseburg, OR 97471

Public Attendees: Robin Meacher, Cascadia Wildlands; Kat Fiedler, Legal Intern for Cascadia Wildlands; Doug Heiken, Oregon Wild; Reed Wilson, Benton Forest Coalition; Ross Mickey, American Forest Resource Council (via phone).

Forest Service Attendees: Alice Carlton, Forest Supervisor; K.C. Briggs, Cottage Grove District Ranger; Jane Beaulieu, Forest Environmental Coordinator; Kris Sexton, Forest Ecosystem Staff Officer; Cameron Mitchell, Cottage Grove District Wildlife Biologist; Sally Christensen, NEPA Planner (Note Taker); Tiffany Young, Forest Wildlife Biologist (via phone); Debbie Anderson, Regional Office- Objections Coordinator (via phone).

Overview of Meeting Rules-Jane Beaulieu, Facilitator

We would like each objector to highlight their key points that they wish to share with the Forest Supervisor (the Objection Reviewing Officer), the District Ranger (the Responsible Official), and the Interdisciplinary Team, with the understanding that their written objections will be responded to in writing.

The Forest Supervisor is most interested in listening to the objectors options for resolution; if new or additional resolution ideas are brought forward, there may be follow up meetings with the Responsible Official. The meeting will be facilitated and notes will be kept. The notes will be circulated after the meeting, with the final version posted to the web. While the meeting is open to the public, please note that only parties to the objection, as listed below, will be participating in the discussions with the Objection Reviewing Officer.

Each objector has approximately 30 minutes to outline key concerns and any resolution/remedy points to consider. If the objection was submitted by a group or organization, you may choose who you would like to represent your group; if multiple people are speaking, they must share the allotted time for the group. This session with the Reviewing Officer, Responsible Official, and team will focus on key points that each objector would like to highlight in order to determine if resolution is possible. Objectors will present in the following order:

- Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild
- Benton Forest Coalition
- American Forest Resource Council

Opening Remarks by the Objection Reviewing Officer-Alice Carlton, Forest Supervisor

Good afternoon, thank you for your participation as we continue to improve on this integrated project. We know you place a high importance on our projects and we thank you for your time helping us improve this project. This is my (Alice's) first project being the Objection reviewing officer. As you know the old

appeals process was post-decisional and didn't allow for this kind of interaction. The objection process is great and intended for these type discussions. I would specifically like to hear any resolution ideas you may have. Remember that K.C. is the decision maker and will sign the final decision, not myself (Alice). Alice is the reviewing officer. Many of you have already participated in this project, helped up to shape the project, and have offered additional thoughts and data. Any additional thoughts for changes should be brought to K.C. This is not a hearing, but rather a chance to better understand the objections and facilitate dialog and key in on points of resolution. This is the only opportunity with myself (Alice), but continued dialog is encouraged with K.C.

While waiting for Cameron to make copies Doug asked K.C. to share some background info about herself. She worked on Willamette as fisheries biologist. Most recently worked as fisheries biologist on the Okanogan-Wenatchee, Cle Elum Ranger District. K.C. also appreciates everyone's time and welcomes any additional meetings if needed.

Key Concerns and Resolution Proposals

Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild- Robin Meacher and Doug Heiken

This is a joint objection so they will share a 30 minute window

- A key concern surrounds stands over 80. Over half the project is over 80. These stands were naturally regenerated after fire. The EA compares them to artificially regenerated stands 45-60 years old. Cascadia Wildlands and Oregon Wild disagree with them being called similar and discussed in the same way. They have a different function. The proposed treatments interferes with natural succession. Natural mortality is occurring and is good. The purpose of the treatment is to release them to encourage "vigorous growth." The release expected isn't worth truncating the natural succession. These stands are developing their own characteristics.
- Another key concern over Non-High Priority (NHP) site designation in good quality red tree vole (RTV) habitat. Concerned over the process: Forest Service (FS) surveys only found 1 site, then NEST surveyed and found more, greatly concerned with the discrepancies. How/why was the NHP site designated after the citizen surveyors found many sites in the great habitat. Want help understanding how that big discrepancy happened. Cascadia Wildlands and Oregon Wild want to be confident moving forward with surveys. This "NHP" site is the best quality in the area so it is disheartening. This area has been hit hard by past timber management, so to see natural stands being treated the same as the plantations is discouraging. The groups would like to have more conversations over NHP site designation and surveys. Stands over 80 are important. Everyone seems to agree there are lots of RTVs, therefore how is it a NHP site?
- Another key concern is treating these stand for resilience to fire. The EA says this area is likely to experience high severity fire. Cascadia Wildlands and Oregon Wild don't feel the risk of fire is worth the treatments. Don't believe these treatments will stop fire from occurring.
- Robin Meacher turned it over to Doug Heiken. He said Oregon Wild feels that logging was too heavy in the past. There is lots of early to mid-seral forest the FS should treat and not in these old stands. Efforts to improve these stands are worse than leaving them alone. Cost is exceeding the benefits. Young stands are the opposite-benefits can exceed the costs.
- Oregon Wild is open to fuel breaks along roads, but concerned when mature stands are involved. Stay on the plantation side of the road when possible.
- He is concerned that the EA says fire can be manipulated to benefit wildlife, doesn't see how. Fuel reduction is degrading the habitat. And fire is rare enough that we shouldn't degrade habitat to try to save it. EA misinterprets the effects.

- How did we go from surveys of one inactive nest (FS) to so many RTVs (NEST) to going to NHP site designation? Severe whiplash. Survey protocol isn't good if it was so far off. The NHP site isn't correctly used here. Wants to know which process was used and the team's thought process because the direction in the Survey & Manage ROD is so vague.
- Point of Resolution is to get rid of NHP site designations and protect the red tree vole. Look at sites we know and 100 meters around them and then drop all the nests. Protect the red tree vole. Oregon Wild would allow the project to move forward with these modifications.

Benton Forest Coalition - Reed Wilson

- Reed is from Corvallis and gets to rub shoulders with science and PNW scientists like Eric Forsman. If he has questions about habitat he goes to them and can attend lectures. Benton Forest Coalition chief concern is loss of habitat from commercial thinning, especially native forest.
- The fire regenerated stands here have lots of legacy trees, and trees have cavities for 48 species of birds, 11 bats, red tree voles, northern spotted owls, flying squirrels, and a clouded salamander which they found in the trees. The alteration of these ecosystems that evolved of natural origin is losing habitat for species that have adapted with the ecosystem.
- The combination thinning, fuels reduction, etc. with climate change will harm forests and encourage blowdown.
- Also have concerns over description of habitat. The EA paints everything with the same brush. Some descriptions he is concerned about are, "Alternatives 2 and 3 would not result in negative impacts because of poor habitat; fuels breaks are in low quality habitat, 90-130 year old stands are primarily even aged stands that naturally regenerated and are densely stocked dominated by single species and lack structural diversity, snags, large down wood, no gaps, etc." So he decided to go take pictures to see if this was true.

The group viewed the pictures Reed brought and he described them as follows.

- Started by looking at stands that withdrawn from harvest. Alternative 3 addresses key issues of older forest management by withdrawing 97 acres of 90-130 age stands. Reed went to look at withdrawn stands.
- Stand 33-112 years old. Dropped Unit. He saw old growth trees and snags. Approached from south end. Old growth on edges, hike into unit you see crowded younger stand. Good visibility in unit but lacked structure. Pictures 1-6.
- Unit 22-55 acres. Dropped unit. Ridge going down from road into middle of unit. Pictures 7-9 show that trees were small and stunted, lots of understory. All Survey and Manage species are connected. The western Cascades northern spotted owl pair consumes 57 red tree voles per year and are reliant on this species. Picture 10 shows brushy tree that red tree voles may nest in. Red tree voles live 2 years and when you thin, they have to go to the ground to find a mate and can get eaten because you disturbed connectivity. Picture 11 depicts the single story.
- Unit 3, pictures 12-14. FS surveys were conducted. Large trees and incense cedar along ridge. Overall matches description in EA.
- Unit 6. Picture 15, meadow enhancements on right. Picture 16-17, lack structural complexity.
- Unit 8, 9 acres. It is very different from other units. It has legacy trees at each end. District didn't find red tree voles. Picture 19, from the top of the unit-big trees and variety; Picture 20 broken top, Picture 21 shows large nesting platform in the broken top tree with possible cavity. Red tree vole nest discovered by citizen surveyors; Picture 22 natural opening with old growth tree;

Picture 23 shows undergrowth; Picture 24 same; Picture 25 at bottom of unit, has legacy trees; Picture 26 shows broke top.

- Unit 5, 69 acres. Picture 28, interspersed legacy trees throughout; Picture 29, natural opening; Picture 30, old growth tree with undergrowth; Picture 31 from road with sign of unit 5, old growth tree at unit eight with nesting platform; Picture 32, several more old growth; Picture 33, broken top; Picture 34, nice trees and understory; Picture 35, tree has red tree vole nest in it; Picture 36, broken top. Picture 37, tree is not in the unit but talking about collateral damage from commercial thinning. Including red tree vole trees (for example). Fish and Wildlife Service allows individual tree removal for hazard trees or operational trees. This is in the helicopter landing site. This tree has platform. Right across the road from the unit.
- Unit 20. Pictures 18-20-similar with old growth trees approaching a classic old growth stand; Pictures 38-39 show undergrowth; Picture 40, snag in natural opening. And tree on right has classic structure; Picture 41-undergrowth; Picture 42, natural opening; Picture 43, habitat tree; Picture 44, large down woody debris and old growth; Picture 44, tree with damage but has recovered with branch cluster so red tree vole surveyors would target these trees, female red tree voles especially like these large areas for their young; Picture 45, density of legacy tree; Picture 46-51 showing old growth and structure. Picture 51 has debris to right that may indicate nest; Picture 52, vertical cavity for northern spotted owl, red tree vole or pileated woodpecker; Picture 53-56, illustrates clumpiness of legacy trees; Picture 57, red tree vole nest-not a squirrel nest, red tree voles will reuse old nests.

Reed Wilson turned it over to Doug Heiken.

- Doug asked Reed if unit 20 had a bunch of sites and included in the NHP sites? Reed said yes, similar to 18, 19, and 20.
- Doug asked Alice how we got from one FS nest to public interaction (comment period and NEST data) to NHP site designation. Alice said that conversation should be with K.C. and wildlife outside of this meeting. Perhaps after this meeting.
- Doug said this info is important to our resolution. Critical to know if the known sites been thoroughly documented to this point. He asked if the 100 meter sites have been evaluated. Cameron said that all the info from Reed and NEST has been surveyed 100 meters around nests and they did reveal nests.
- Doug asked if the FS made additional efforts to redo surveys since they seemed to be ineffective. First surveys had lots of false negatives or did FS only verify what was turned in? Cameron said we only surveyed around the turned in areas, which did reveal a few more nests in the 100 meter area.
- Doug referred to Table 30 on page 152 of the EA-Row River watershed attributes. At the bottom it says NHP-18 sites, 2 unconfirmed, and total sites requested is 24. Where did the extra 4 come from? Cameron said he needed to look into the table, but knows nothing was designated prior to the project. He will digest it further and will get back to him.
- Alice asked Tiffany and Cameron to describe the protocol, process, address some of the concerns. Tiffany said she would have liked prior meeting to answer these questions so we could have prepared to answer these details, will defer to Cameron. Cameron said that for the protocol, the concept is Brown's transects. We walk the transect and look up to identify any nesting structures. Then assess those trees to look into the nesting material for resin ducts. The quality of the ducts is used to determine active or not active. We ran transects through all the older stands which was much more stands than we have now. Surveys were done by Cameron, Rob Cox, and a crew. They climbed about 15 trees and only found one inactive nest.

- Alice asked Cameron what if you looked at a tree that might have a nest but it was too dangerous to climb. Cameron said this would be determined an unconfirmed species and treated as if it was an active red tree vole site. They would assume occupancy and protect.
- Doug said he is concern over protocol if you can have so many false negatives.
- Reed asked Cameron if he had prior experience doing red tree vole surveys. Cameron said he had not, but Rob Cox had a lot of experience. Reed asked Cameron what technique of climbing he used. Cameron said mainly spur climbing and some robe climbing. Reed asked if a contractor was hired to check some nests. Cameron said yes, the contractor climbed the safe trees (15-20) to confirm nests. Reed said, "The contractor climbed broken tops, so is that safe for you?" Cameron said that the contactor climbed what he felt was safe, which is the ultimate climbing rule. We used the data turned in help inform where we could climb. Trees that said they had cavities or with multiple deformities were usually deemed too dangerous. Reed asked what in the original transect surveys would trigger a survey. Cameron said any time you would see a structure other than the tree itself, such as accumulation of debris, not necessarily just a limb itself.
- Doug asked Cameron to talk about the NHP designation process. Cameron explained that it is a 4 step process. First, is it appropriate? We utilized a variety of tools as a habitat model, used by PNW, which gave a baseline level of habitat at the 5th field watershed. Second, assess the on the ground condition to see if they met the criteria. Third, worked with PNW and RO Survey and Manage team to come up with the framework for analysis and fourth, the team concluded that the criteria was met.
- Doug said 30,525 of 179,000 acres are in reserves. EA said 64% not 17% actually in reserves. It was amount of suitable habitat in reserve. Doug is concerned over red tree vole persistence and this is not a good site for NHP. Maybe if it was actually 64% but not the real 17%.
- Alice asked Doug if he had any resolution suggestions. Doug said to apply management protections without using the NHP designation. Don't just leave the nest trees, follow the direction. Concerned over why no follow up surveys were conducted after FS surveys failed. FS only checked the NEST sites. Starting place for discussion is to protect known sites using management direction.
- Reed Wilson said Units 18, 19, and 20 provide a large area of good habitat. Good red tree vole and nesting, roosting, foraging habitat for northern spotted owl. Units 8, and 4, and other small units had significantly larger trees. Some areas could use thinning, but also had clumps of large trees. The surveyors climbed some trees in these areas. Would like to see more surveys in these areas. Unit 5-don't know the nature of the 69 acres and how many nesting opportunities there are in Unit 5, but would like to go visit it further.

Ross Mickey, American Forest Resource Council

- Suggestion to Alice-He was under the impression this is a resolution meeting not rehashing previous concerns that should have been discussed years ago. All this discussion over surveys should have been talked about during the planning process. Talking about it now isn't useful to get to a decision.
- Putting this into context: this is a draft decision for a project that has been going on for a number of years. These forests are not managed for a single purpose. We don't harvest every tree we could or save every tree. We don't do everything everywhere. Timber is part of the original mission and it is now multiple-use. The management of national forest is always a tradeoff. Tradeoffs are determined by the planning process. Ninety percent of the land was left for other than timber purposes. Ten percent of the land is for timber, but even in there only a small portion is available due to various protections. The Umpqua has a very small portion with a timber

component. The Quartz project is in matrix which is intended for timber. You have the Northwest Forest Plan. People want to change it for various reasons. Some people don't like it including myself, but we have a plan that says how to manage it. You did your job to protocol, whether that is appropriate or not is not for this discussion. The project was not issued a take.

- AFRC's main objection is the FS is not meeting the Forest Plan. This is matrix. This project is also not meeting the purpose and need, which is to improve stand growth, provide for forest products, resiliency, meadows, and aquatics. The purpose and need doesn't say retain everything over 80 or older forest, all red tree voles, etc.
- AFRC disagrees with your decision to remove 97 acres. You decrease meeting purpose and need to the point where you're not meeting it. You said in your decision document that eliminating acres would not meet the purpose and need, therefore deferring of acres and removal of acres doesn't meet the purpose and need by your definition. Nothing in the EA or DN gives you the authority to remove acres of older forest. That is arbitrary and capricious. Put the dropped 97 acres and 99 acres deferred back in. The FS went through the planning process and was left with a small land base being treated so you should be treating that area. Put that area back in.
- Alice asked Ross if he had any other questions for the team. He said no, they (AFRC) have been included from the beginning and everyone should be able to work out the kinks. Should be objecting over what is wrong, not because you don't like it. I could be doing the same thing.

Closing Remarks- Jane

Thank you for participating. Contact K.C. to continue to work towards resolution.

The 45-day review period ends on July 7th; the reviewing officer has the discretion to extend it for another 30-days, which makes the due date August 8th. There are several outcomes that could occur:

1. Your objections could be resolved based on continued dialogue. If we do resolve your objection, you'll need to formally withdraw it and then Alice will formally set it aside. The Responsible Official will incorporate the resolution into the final decision.
2. If we resolve some issues, we will then respond in writing to the remaining issues and incorporate the partial resolution into the final decision.
3. If there is no resolution of issues, we will respond in writing to all issues. The written response may include instructions or clarifications from the Reviewing Officer; if there are no instructions or clarifications, then the decision can be signed.
4. All documents, including the notes from this meeting, will be posted to the project's website at the conclusion of the review.

After the meeting was adjourned, the objectors were offered the opportunity to stay and continue discussions with the District Ranger. Cascadia Wildlands and Oregon Wild representatives stayed and talked with K.C., Cameron and Tiffany.